



CONSERVANCY Of Southwest Florida

*Preserving Southwest Florida's
natural environment and
quality of life ... now and forever.*

May 12, 2009

Chairman Eric Buermann
South Florida Water Management District
P.O. Box 24680
West Palm Beach, FL 33416-4680

RE: SFWMD Consideration of Purchasing U.S. Sugar Lands

Chairman Eric Buermann and SFWMD Governing Board Members:

The Conservancy of Southwest Florida, representing our 6,000 members, is writing to express our strong support for the purchase of the US Sugar lands. Our members have suffered greatly from the water quality degradation that has wracked our coastline as a result of the polluted releases from Lake Okeechobee, which are a result of insufficient water storage and treatment – particularly within the Everglades Agricultural Area. The purchase of these lands represents one of the most significant opportunities ever presented in our lifetime to stem this degradation and to ensure South Florida's sustainability and quality of life.

Despite the economic downturn, this is absolutely the right time to buy these lands. There is a narrow window of opportunity to meet our pressing need for additional water storage and treatment for Everglades restoration and for our growing South Florida population. This is an investment in our ecological infrastructure that provides a basic necessity: clean freshwater. As an organization that has worked on Everglades issues for decades, we can unequivocally say that no other solution can provide the amount of storage and treatment needed for the natural system and our citizens.

Truly the future and well-being of Southwest Florida's residents, environment, and long-term economy lies in your hands with this momentous decision. On behalf of our 6,000 members, we respectfully ask you to vote to approve the acquisition of the US Sugar lands as proposed.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Hecker
Natural Resources Policy Manager

cc: Governor Crist
Secretary Sole, FDEP
Mr. Charles Dauray, SFWMD
Mr. Jerry Montgomery, SFWMD
Ms. Melissa Meeker, SFWMD
Mr. Michael Collins, SFWMD
Mr. Patrick Rooney, SFWMD
Ms. Shannon Estenoz, SFWMD